Perceptions of the History of the Church in the Early Middle Ages

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One of the most crucial aspects of the reception and dissemination of Christian writing in the Carolingian world, that is, the area ruled by the Franks in the eighth and ninth centuries, was the perception of their original context.[1] This perception of the original impetus for, and the time and place of, the composition of Christian theology, exegesis, moral guidance and ascetic instruction was itself shaped by a small group of seminal texts concerned with the history of the Church and the Christian faith.

In a companion piece to this paper, I have focussed in detail on three of these texts in particular.[2] The most influential of them was the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Eusebius (*ca.* 260-339) in the Latin translation by Rufinus (*ca.* 345-410).[3] It is important to stress that this Latin version is essentially an interpretation and edition of Eusebius and not a literal translation,[4] quite apart from the fact that Rufinus added two new books and cut most of Eusebius's book X.[5]

[1] I argue the case more fully for this in my forthcoming *The Migration of Ideas in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge). Because this paper is part of my current research and one of a clutch of related papers, I hope I may be forgiven for citing some of the others in the course of this discussion.

[2] R. MCKITTERICK, "The Carolingian Church and the book", in: *The Church and the Book*, ed. R. SWANSON (Oxford, 2003: *Studies in Church History* 37).

[3] *Eusebius Werke*, 2: *Die Kirchengeschichte und die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus*, ed. E. SCHWARZ and T. MOMMSEN (Leipzig, 1903).

[4] See T. CHRISTENSEN, *Rufinus of Aquileia and the Historia ecclesiastica Lib. VIII-IX of Eusebius* (Copenhagen, 1989: *Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser* 58).

[5] Despite F. WINKELMANN, *Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisareia* (Berlin, 1966: *Sitzungsberichte der deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin:*

Eusebius had recounted the history of the Christian Church to the reign of Constantine († 337) and Rufinus extended it to the death of the emperor Theodosius I († 395). Secondly, Eusebius inspired and provided much of the information for Jerome (*ca.* 350-420) when the latter compiled his *De viris illustribus* ca. 392. The work, continued ca. 480 by Gennadius of Marseille, contains short accounts of a total of 234 Christian authors, in chronological order, describing where and when they lived and what they wrote.[6] Isidore of Seville (*ca.* 570-636) in the early seventh century added a further 33 authors, including some notable writers of the sixth century.[7] Lastly, there is the *Historia tripartita*, a Latin compilation and abridgement by Epiphanius for Cassiodorus (first half of the sixth century), of the ecclesiastical histories of three Greek writers, Sozomen (first half of the fifth century), Socrates (*ca.* 380-440) and Theodoret (first half of the fifth century). There is some overlap in content between this work and Rufinus's books X and XI, but the *Historia tripartita* takes the story up to the middle of the fifth century, provides complementary material for the fourth century, and a particularly dramatic presentation of the Arian conflict.[8] In the companion piece already mentioned I have suggested that these three works played a key role in creating a context for the Franks' understanding not only of the history of the Church, but also of the circumstances of the composition and dissemination of scripture and the work of the Fathers of the early Church.

Indeed, I have argued that the Church was envisaged from the fourth century onwards primarily in terms of texts and more particularly, of the writings containing the fundamental ideas of Christian faith and practice. Such a perception was a direct consequence of the distinctive presentation of the history of the Christian Church offered by Eusebius-Rufinus. Eusebius's emphasis, preserved and augmented by Rufinus, was on the writers who were the pillars of the Church, on the definition of written authority and the canon of scripture,

Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst 1965 Nr. 3), who argued that Rufinus translated a now-lost Greek continuation of Eusebius' by Gelasius of Caesarea, Rufinus's authorship of books X and XI has been vindicated: see F. THELAMON, *Païens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: L'apport de l'histoire ecclésiastique de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris, 1981), CHRISTENSEN, *Rufinus of Aquileia*, and the useful summary of the debate in P.R. AMIDON, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, Books 10 and 11* (Oxford, 1997), pp. XIII-XVII.

[6] Jerome-Gennadius, *Liber de viris inlustribus*, ed. E.C. RICHARDSON, *Hieronymus de viris inlustribus* (Leipzig, 1896: *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 14, Heft 1a).

[7] C.C. MERINO, *El "De viris illustribus" de Isidoro de Sevilla: Estudio y edicion critica* (Salamanca, 1964: *Theses et Studia philologica Salamanticensia* 12).

[8] *Cassiodori-Epiphanii Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, ed. W. JACOB and R. HANSLIK (Vienna, 1952: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 71).

and on the great doctrinal controversies and discussions by theologians of the early Church. Jerome and his continuator Gennadius consolidated this emphasis by presenting what amounts to a systematic bibliographical guide. The theme of written authority was then taken up and echoed in the *Historia tripartita* of Epiphanius-Cassiodorus. Taken together Eusebius-Rufinus, Jerome-Gennadius, and Epiphanius-Cassiodorus present a close association and essential continuation of the formation of a textual tradition within the chronological framework of the history of the Church. The development of the Church is thus also a textual history. The histories of the Church written in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries provided both framework and context for a past and an identity built on texts.

Such a perception of the Church and its historical development accords with the clear indications that the Franks in the Carolingian period identified themselves in relation to particular texts. They recognized books as symbols of authority of the Church and of God.[9] They themselves played a fundamental role in the definition of a canon of writings. That canon was constructed with the aid also of such bibliographical guides as Jerome-Gennadius-Isidore's *De viris illustribus* and Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*[10] and rested in its turn on the ecclesiastical histories written in the fourth and fifth centuries described above.

The Franks' understanding of the significance of these histories, and the tight interweaving of texts and authors in their narratives, is amply shown by the evidence of the library catalogues and the production and dissemination of copies of Jerome-Gennadius, Eusebius-Rufinus and Epiphanius-Cassiodorus throughout the Frankish realms in the eighth and ninth centuries.[11] In consequence, it would be possible to argue that, in this fundamental conception of the history of the Church built on texts and writing, and of the Franks' place within that history, words are all. Images appear to have little place.

Similarly, in documenting responses to the various histories of the Church received and read in the Carolingian period, there is an overwhelming impression of readers of texts, and of scribes copying texts. Imaginative understanding in verbal form, however, should not be underestimated. Mental images of writers, prophets, monks, bishops, martyrs, scribes, translators and scholars emerge strongly from the *De viris illustribus*, the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the *Histo-*

[9] I have discussed this at greater length in R. MCKITTERICK, "Essai sur les représentations de l'écrit dans les manuscrits carolingiens", *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 86-87 (1995), pp. 37-61.

[10] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, ed. R.A.B. MYNORS (Oxford, 1937); See R. MCKITTERICK, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 165-210.

[11] MCKITTERICK, "The Carolingian Church and the book".

ria tripartita. So does a specific spatial understanding of time and place. Naturally there is a danger of a modern reader making subjective and anachronistic assumptions about the way in which books may have been read in the past.[12] Yet the authors present the accounts of Christian writers with such consistent clarity of focus on precisely such issues as time, place and authority, that there seems little doubt about the impression an early medieval reader might gain. Because of the location of these authors in the chronological framework of the development of the Christian Church, ana also because of the geographical distribution of these various pillars of the Church, an understanding of a Christian intellectual geography was created alongside an emphasis on sacred places and on the delineation of the Holy Land.[13]

Pictorial images might reinforce these verbal pictures of authoritative writers and sacred places, but not replace them.[14] Actual images can be dissociated neither from mental images created by words nor from the texts to which the pictures are related. How text-based the Frankish understanding of the past and of historical narratives was, may be underlined by the observation of how rarely historical narratives of any kind – classical, biblical, late antique or early medieval – were illustrated in the early Middle Ages. Where illustrations are included in history books, it is in the biblical history books and more often than not as images of writers and individuals of authority in relation to scripture. A prime example is the depiction of scenes from the life of Jerome included in the Vivian Bible and the Bible of San Paolo fuori le mura, both of which were given to Charles the Bald, king of the West Franks, 840-877. Here the scenes chosen for illustration are those of the composition and dissemination of the text of Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Bible.[15] The dramatic battle scenes

[12] For some attempts at reconstructions of the reading process in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see: *A History of Reading*, ed. G. CAVALLO and R. CHARTIER (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

[13] Compare on geographical ideas N. LOZOVSKY, *"The Earth is Our Book": Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* (Ann Arbor, 2000), A. MERRILLS, "Geography in early medieval Christian historiography", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge (2000) and P. GAUTIER DALCHÉ, *Géographie et culture: La représentation de l'espace du VI^e^ au XII^e^ siècle* (Aldershot, 1997). On the Holy Land see R.L. WILKEN, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven and London, 1992).

[14] I have discussed some of the issues this raises in R. MCKITTERICK, "Text and image in the Carolingian world", in: *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. MCKITTERICK (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 297-318. But see also the essays in *Testo e immagine nell'alto medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 41) and, for reflections on the wider context: *Literacy, Politics and Artistic Innovation in the Early Medieval West*, ed. C. CHAZELLE (Lanham, MD, 1992).

[15] The Vivian Bible (MSParis, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1), f. 3v and the Bible of San Paolo fuori le Mura, f. 3v, illustrated in H. KESSLER, *The Illustrated Bibles from Tours*

in the St. Gallen Golden Psalter and Leiden Maccabees codices, on the other hand, both produced at St. Gallen, are straightforward exceptions to this in mirroring a direct representation of what is described in the text.[16]

There are, furthermore, some striking instances from the Carolingian period of the way that the distinctive stress on texts, authors, authority and sacred places in the ecclesiastical histories, *De viris illustribus* and a number of related texts could be drawn on by readers, scribes and artists. It is on two examples of these that I wish to focus in this paper. I shall explore the way in which this written tradition of the Church appears to have shaped perceptions and attitudes, and how the particular image of the Church and the Christian faith, presented by the historical tradition I have outlined above and disseminated so zealously by the Franks, manifests itself in the Carolingian period. Let us look, therefore, at two manuscripts, MS Vercelli Biblioteca Capitolare, Cod. CLXV, a collection of canon law, and MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, CLM 22053, the miscellany containing the famous *Wessobrunner Gebet*.

The Vercelli canon law manuscript is a local compilation from northern Italy to be dated no later than the second quarter of the ninth century and probably to be located to the church of San Felice in Pavia.[17] The compiler drew on a library well-stocked with canon law books. He included canons from Gallo-Roman and Merovingian Church councils, papal letters, a handful of extracts from the episcopal statute of Theodulf of Orléans (750/760-821) and rare texts from Africa as well as extracts from major canon law collections from Italy and Merovingian and Carolingian Gaul, most notably in the selections from the original *Dionysiana* compiled in the first half of the sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus, the *Dionysio-Hadriana* (the eighth-century Frankish edition of the *Dionysiana*), the 'Bobbio *Dionysiana*', the so-called *Sanblasiana* collection (also from Italy), the *Breviatio canonum* compiled *ca.* 535 by Ferrandus of

(Princeton, 1977), Pls. 130-131.

[16] MS St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 22, pp. 140-141, illustrated in: F. MÜTHERICH and J. GAEHDE, *Carolingian Painting* (London, 1976), Pls. 46-47, and MS Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Perizonius 17, ff. 9r and 46r, illustrated in: J. HUBERT, J. PORCHER and W. VOLBACH, *Carolingian Art* (London, 1970), Pls. 163-164, pp. 177-178.

[17] I have not been able so far to consult this manuscript and am reliant on the published descriptions, notably the full analysis of its contents by K. ZECHIEL-ECKES, *Die Concordia canonum des Cresconius: Studien und Edition* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992: *Freiburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte* 5), pp. 172-184. This provides an essential supplement to F. MAASSEN, *Bibliotheca latina iuris canonici manuscripta* (Vienna, 1866), pp. 418-419 and IDEM, *Geschichte der Quellen des canonischen Rechts im Abendlande bis zum Ausgange des Mittelalters* 1 (Graz, 1870), pp. 799-802.

Carthage († 546/547) and the sixth-century Italian (or possibly African) compilation known as the *Concordia Canonum* of Cresconius.

The compilation is a very substantial corpus indeed. It begins with the *Canones apostolorum*, and then in sequence the canons of the councils of Nicaea, Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, Constantinople, Chalcedon, Sardica and Carthage. Many of these councils of course are famous for their consideration of the Christological controversies and the efforts to define orthodoxy which racked the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries. Discussion also embraced, however, such matters as the true nature of asceticism (Gangra), discipline (Antioch), the treatment of heretics, liturgy, penance and Church order (Laodicea), and it is to these more general matters that most of the remaining texts gathered in the Vercelli collection are devoted, especially Ferrandus of Carthage's *Breviatio canonum*.

The text of the *Breviatio* in the Vercelli collection is one of three surviving manuscript copies. The second is from southern France and the third from Rhaetia; either of these two regions may have been the source of the Vercelli compiler's exemplar.[18] The *Breviatio* is a systematic arrangement of 232 extracts from the Greek and African councils of the fourth and fifth centuries organized by topic with references to the relevant conciliar canon. It thus serves as a vade-mecum to the full texts of the council records of the earlier part of the codex. Thus, there are groups of clauses on matters concerning bishops, priests, deacons and other clerics, councils, heretics, Jews and pagans, baptism, observance of Lent and behaviour in church. Number 85, for example, reads as follows:

> *Ut presbyter ante XXX annorum aetatem, quamvis sit dignus, non ordinetur. Concilio Neo Caesariensi tit.10;*

number 134:

> *Ut clerici edendi vel bibendi cause tabernas non ingrediatur, nisi peregrinationes necessitas coegerit. Concilio Laodicensi tit. 23, item 24., item 25. Concilio Carthaginensi, tit. 55;*

number 186:

> *Ut nullus a Judaeis azyma accipiat. Concilio Laodicensi tit. 36;*

[18] See ZECHIEL-ECKES, *Concordia canonum*, pp. 71-74.

and number 228:

> *Ut praeter scripturas canonicas nihil in ecclesia legatur. Concilio Laodicensi tit. 57. Concilio Carthaginensi tit. 45.*[19]

The compiler at Pavia, therefore, drew on an extensive range of materials to provide a formidable compendium on Christian faith and practice. Zechiel-Eckes has meticulously observed how the compiler reordered into chronological sequence some of the systematic collections he used for his compilation. That is, the chronological sequence and historical development of the Church are mirrored in the ordering of his material. Not only are the conciliar canons arranged historically, but so is the decretal section from the *Concordia canonum* of Cresconius. The stress on the canonical books and orthodoxy, furthermore, is striking. The book as a whole is an eloquent exemplum of how writing and the encoding of the law of the Church contains the fundamental ideas of Christian faith and practice.

The illustrations bunched together at the beginning of the book (rather then interspersed throughout the text) are vigorous pen drawings of six scenes, namely the finding of the True Cross by Helena, the burning of the Arian books at the Council of Nicaea (325), images of Peter and Paul discussing the council of Nicaea, the burning of the books of the Macedonian heretics at the First council of Constantinople (381), the emperor Theodosius II presiding over the council of Ephesus (431), and Christ in Majesty.[20]

These pictures do not simply reflect an artist's attempt to illustrate the convening of the councils recorded in the book. They mirror the themes of the crucified and triumphant Christ, faith and devotion, the role of the emperors in supporting the Christian Church, the definition of orthodoxy, the historical place of the Church in relation to the New Testament and the apostles, and the importance of books and writing as embodiments of the faith. Thus, the pictures form a comment on the text which is itself enhanced by references to texts not in the collection at all. This is not simply a matter of the inclusion of a depiction of the discovery of the True Cross and of the Council of Ephesus which condemned Nestorius, neither of which figures in the compilation at all. The dramatic representations of the burning of the books are also not to be found in

[19] *Concilia Africae, a. 345-535*, ed. C. MUNIER (Turnhout, 1974: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 149), pp. 287-306 at pp. 294, 298, 302, 305.

[20] Illustrated in: J. HUBERT, J. PORCHER, and W. VOLBACH, *Europe in the Dark Ages* (London, 1969), Pls. 156-161, pp. 142-147, and see also the descriptions and reproductions in C. WALTER, "Les dessins carolingiens dans un manuscrit de Verceil", *Cahiers Archéologiques* 18 (1968), pp. 99-107.

the canons of the relevant council but, at least for the Council of Nicaea, in the account of this council provided by the *Historia tripartita* of Epiphanius-Cassiodorus.

Thus, the burning of the Arian books under Constantine portrayed on f. 2v, for example, was recorded by Socrates in his ecclesiastical history and incorporated into the *Historia tripartita*.[21] The immolation of the Macedonian books, on the other hand, may be the artist's creative assumption, on analogy with the historical account of Nicaea, for neither the very full coverage of the disputes with the Macedonians (a subgroup within the Arian party) in the *Historia tripartita*,[22] nor the canons of Constantinople itself refer to the burning of the writings of these groups, only their anathematization.[23] In other words, authority was seen by this artist in terms of books, and the countering of heresy was envisaged in terms of the destruction of books. The other pictures reinforce the message of the book embodying authority. Paul displays a book in his hand, even if Peter holds the two keys. In the representation of the Council of Nicaea, Constantine is depicted with a roll in his hand and the notary writes in a codex. The illustration of the first Council of Constantinople shows Theodosius holding a book in his left hand and the notaries to his right and left inscribe what he and the assembled bishops (crowding behind the two scribes) decide in the book each of them holds. Similarly, Theodosius at Ephesus has his own codex in his hand and is flanked by two scribes, each writing in a book. These images associating the emperors with written authority and orthodoxy confirmed in codex form culminate in the representation of Christ himself, also holding a book. The link between Christ in Majesty in heaven, with an angel to his right and left, and the opening picture of this sequence, namely, the finding of the True Cross, the instrument of Christ's passion on earth, is reinforced by placing Helena and Constantine beneath Christ in attitudes of supplication. These pictures together, therefore, express the principal preoccupations of the texts in MS Vercelli CLXV in a way that reflects a wider historical knowledge and understanding of the contexts from which the conciliar canons emerged.

The detail in the scene of the discovery of the True Cross, moreover, betrays the Pavia artist's wider range of reference. He drew not only on his histor-

[21] *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, II, 15, p. 109.

[22] *Ibid.*, V, 31, 41, 42 and IX, 12-16, pp. 260-262, 285-290, 506-522.

[23] *Ecclesiae occidentalis monumenta iuris antiquissima, canonum et conciliorum graecorum interpretationes latinae*, ed. C. TURNER, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1899), 2, p. 409, and compare W. SPEYER, *Büchervernichtung und Zensur des Geistes bei Heiden, Juden und Christen* (Stuttgart, 1981: *Bibliothek des Buchwesens* 7), pp. 142-157; Speyer, p. 152, notes that a law of Theodosius II and Valentinian in 436, incorporated into the *Theodosian Code* in the aftermath of the Council of Ephesus (431) did specify the burning of the works of Nestorius.

ical understanding of the development of the Christian faith and practice as reflected in the law of the Church and at least one ecclesiastical history. Certainly the legend of the discovery of the Cross by Helena is to be found in both Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* X, 7-8 and the *Historia tripartita* II, 18.[24] Rufinus recounts simply that Helena, "alerted by divine visions", journeyed to Jerusalem and there discovered the True Cross together with the crosses of the two thieves. The identity of the Cross was established by a healing miracle. Subsequently the Nails were also found, and Helena had them incorporated into a helmet for her son Constantine, and into the bridle of his warhorse. A church was then built on the site. The *Historia tripartita* adds little to this apart from reflecting on a Sibylline oracle and a prophecy of Zachariah, both of which seem to foretell the finding of the Cross and the incorporation of the Nails into war gear.

An alternative version known in the Latin West, however, was the so-called 'Cyriacus version' of the legend.[25] This introduces the character of the Jew 'Iudas' who shows Helena the spot where the Cross lay buried. Judas is subsequently converted and baptized, changes his name to Cyriacus, and becomes Bishop of Jerusalem. The earliest manuscript of the Cyriacus version is a fifth-century Syriac text, but a Latin version survives in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 2769, a sixth-century uncial manuscript probably from Italy.[26] That this version was also known in Gaul in the sixth century is clear from the reference made to it by Gregory of Tours (*ca.* 540-594) in his *Histories*.[27] Other copies of the Cyriacus legend survive in Carolingian manuscripts from St. Gallen, Paris, Langres, St. Amand and southern France. They can be divided into subgroups related only distantly and thus attest to a very wide dissemination of this version of the True Cross story during the Merovingian and early Carolingian period.[28]

In many ways the Cyriacus version complements the Rufinus version, save that the dreams at the outset are attributed to Constantine, and Judas/Cyriacus plays such a prominent practical role. That both versions of the story were

[24] Rufinus, pp. 967-970, and *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, pp. 114-115.

[25] H. and J.W. DRIJVERS, *The Finding of the True Cross: The Judas Kyriakos Legend in Syriac* (Louvain, 1997).

[26] E.A. LOWE, *Codices latini antiquiores*, 12 vols. (Oxford, 1934-1972), 5, No. 550.

[27] Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum libri decem*, I, 36, ed. B. KRUSCH, revised by R. BUCHNER, 2 vols. (Darmstadt, 1977: *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 2-3), 1, p. 40.

[28] S. BORGHAMMER, *How the Holy Cross Was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend* (Stockholm, 1991: *Bibliotheca theologiae practicae* 47), pp. 208-228 on the manuscripts and pp. 255-71 for an edition of the Latin text.

known early on, but that some people consciously preferred one to the other, is suggested by the comment in Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History* to the effect that there were some who said that the crosses were first discovered by a Jew who derived his information from certain documents left to him by his father. Sozomen comments, however, that divine revelation in dreams and signs is to be preferred to human information.[29] It is this preference which Epiphanius, in his abridged Latin version of Sozomen, maintains by omitting all reference to the Jew. The full version of the Cyriacus legend, however, introduces dreams and signs from God for both Constantine and Judas, quite apart from the miracle of raising the dead performed by the True Cross itself.

It is not necessary here to explore the origins or the further ramifications of these Syriac, Latin and Greek versions of the story, for they have been elucidated with great clarity by Han and Jan Willem Drijvers and by Borghammer.[30] What they do suggest, first and on a practical level, is that a version of the story probably originated in Jerusalem in the first half of the fourth century at about the time that the relics of the True Cross were discovered, no doubt while excavating for the foundations of Constantine's church of the Holy Sepulchre on Golgotha. Through Rufinus himself, who had spent many years in Jerusalem, the story reached the West but only in the form he preferred. Other variants, as recorded by others, including Sozomen, also reached the West and circulated concurrently. In the Carolingian period, a number of manuscripts containing each version were produced in widely separated centres. Secondly, the illustration in the Vercelli manuscript suggests that the legend itself was interpreted, by this artist at least, within the context of the discussions and definition of the nature and person of Christ in relation to God the Father. These discussions were precisely those given such prominence in the affairs of the early Christian Church as recounted in the ecclesiastical histories.

Other contexts for the story were provided. A small decorated initial depicting the discovery of Cross and Nails in the Sacramentary of Gellone[31] places it, as one might expect, within the liturgy of the feast for the *Inventio sanctae crucis*.[32] A further response to the Latin version of the Cyriacus legend in the

[29] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 1, ed. R. HUSSEY, *Sozomenus Salamius Historia ecclesiastica*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1860), 1, p. 103; English tr. C.D. HARTRANFT, in: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, 14 vols., ed. H. WACE and P. SCHAFF, 2 (Oxford and New York, 1890), p. 258.

[30] J.W. DRIJVERS, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden, 1992), and BORGHAMMAR, *How the Holy Cross Was Found*.

[31] MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 12048, f. 76v.

[32] Illustrated in HUBERT, PORCHER and VOLBACH, *Europe in the Dark Ages*, Pl. 201,

early Carolingian period was from an artist probably based in the diocese of Augsburg. He provided the earliest-known cycle of illustrations to accompany the Latin version of the Cyriacus legend, in the famous miscellany in the *Wessobrunner Gebet*-manuscript.[33]

This codex was written in the diocese of Augsburg *ca.* 814.[34] It contains texts to do with theology, weights and measures, botany, geography, and chronology. It has been described as a "kind of scrap book or collection of fragments of useful knowledge in the liberal arts",[35] but this is to underrate the coherence of this personal and individual compilation. The first twenty-one folios contain the *Liber de Inventione S. Crucis*. There follows the famous *Wessobrunner Gebet*, which is a description of the void before God created the world, the presence of the Creator and the act of creation. The title given the poem, *De poeta* has been interpreted as 'Creator' and is thought to be a Latinization of the word used by Plato in the *Timaeus*, a text certainly available in the Carolingian period.[36] The glosses also suggest that the compiler knew Greek.

It has been suggested that the poem's composition is either the expression of conviction of a pious Christian or that it should be seen in a missionary context. Its language is predominantly Bavarian, but some have detected in certain discrepancies in the word forms either a provenance further north or else an older stratum of the language.[37] Anglo-Saxon influence has also been discerned.

p. 191.

[33] K. BIERBRAUER, *Die vorkarolingischen und karolingischen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1990: *Katalog der illuminierten Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek* 1.1-2), 1, No. 155, pp. 83-84 and 2, Pls. 319-336.

[34] B. BISCHOFF, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken*, 3rd edn. (Wiesbaden, 1974) , pp. 18-21. See also the discussion by U. SCHWAB, *Die Sternrune im Wessobrunner Gebet: Beobachtungen zur Lokalisierung des CLM 22053, zur Hs. BM Arundel 393 und zu Rune Poem V. 86-89* (Amsterdam, 1973: *Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur* 1).

[35] See J. KNIGHT BOSTOCK, *A Handbook on Old High German Literature*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1976), p. 128, whose discussion of the language of the *Gebet* itself and its implications I here follow.

[36] BOSTOCK, *Handbook*, p. 128. On the *Timaeus*, see: R. MCKITTERICK, "Knowledge of Plato's *Timaeus* in the ninth century: The implications of Valenciennes, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 293", in: *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought*, ed. H.J. WESTRA (Leiden, 1992), pp. 85-95, reprinted in R. MCKITTERICK, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 6th-9th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), chapter X, and more particularly, the important study of the manuscript tradition and its implications in A. SOMFAI, *The Transmission and Reception of Plato's Timaeus and Calcidius's Commentary during the Carolingian Renaissance*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge (1998).

[37] See the useful summary by C. EDWARDS, "German vernacular literature: A survey", in: *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. MCKITTERICK (Cambridge, 1994),

Scholars have therefore looked to Fulda for links, though there are other possible centres in Franconia and there was also an Anglo-Saxon presence in Bavaria itself in the early Carolingian period. A further insular link, possibly with Fulda, however, is suggested by the manuscript tradition of the Cyriacus legend, for one of the other extant ninth-century copies is written in Anglo-Saxon and early caroline minuscule,[38] which may suggest further knowledge of the legend at a place with insular connections in the Main region in Germany. It would be tempting from this perspective as from that of the language of the *Gebet* to posit a link with Fulda itself – and thus knowledge of the historical accounts of the discovery of the Cross in both the ecclesiastical histories and the versions of the legend with the composition of Hraban Maur's extraordinary celebration of the Cross.[39] The manuscript evidence is too ambiguous for this to be stated with certainty.

At the least there is agreement that the texts of both the Cyriacus legend and the *Wessobrunner Gebet* are copied from an older exemplar, perhaps from the late eighth century. Similar to the Vercelli canon law collection, the compiler of the *Wessobrunner Gebet*-codex reveals the extent of the treasury of texts he had at his disposal for inclusion in his book. Similarly, it is the story of the True Cross which, like an invocation, starts each book, though in the case of the *Wessobrunner Gebet*-manuscript it is the whole text, amplified by the illustrations in direct response to its details, rather than simply the single but powerfully symbolic image of the very discovery of the Cross chosen by the Pavia artist.

The *Wessobrunner Gebet*-codex's pictures are simple outline pictures with a sparing use of brownish red, yellow, and blue. The pictures start with Constantine's dream. Helena is then represented in several pictures as she arrives in Jerusalem, and as she talks to soldiers and various groups of Jews. After that the pictures relate how Judas emerges from the dry well into which

pp. 141-170.

[38] MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 129, ff. 16v-22v listed by BORGEHAMMAR, *How the Holy Cross Was Found*, p. 211. See B. BISCHOFF and J. HOFMANN, *Libri sancti Kyliani: Die Würzburger Schreibschule und die Dombibliothek im VIII. und IX. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg, 1952), p. 51. It seems clear, however, that MS Laud misc. 129 itself was not written at Fulda, nor is there any indication that it was ever there: see H. SPILLING, "Angelsächsische Schrift in Fulda", in: *Von der Klosterbibliothek zur Landesbibliothek: Beiträge zum zweihundertjährigen Bestehen der Hessischen Landesbibliothek Fulda*, ed. A. BRALL (Stuttgart, 1978), pp. 47-98, and EADEM, "Die frühe Phase karolingischer Minuskel in Fulda", in: *Kloster Fulda in der Welt der Karolinger und Ottonen*, ed. G. SCHRIMPF (Frankfurt, 1996: *Fuldaer Studien* 7), pp. 249-284, who does not include MS Laud misc. 129 in her discussions.

[39] See M. FERRARI, *Il "Liber sanctae crucis" di Rabano Mauro: Testo – immagine – contesto* (Bern, 1999).

Helena had him thrown, and excavates three crosses at Golgotha. It is then revealed, in the raising of a dead man, which cross is that of Christ. A church is built by Helena, and Judas is baptized and becomes Cyriacus. The Nails are also retrieved.

It is appropriate and a clear association of ideas that the text directly following the *Inventio sanctae crucis* in this book on ff. 22r-35v is the *De situ terrae sanctae* of Theodosius Archidiaconus concerning other sacred places in the Holy Land, written *ca.* 518-530.[40] Thus, the compiler continued to celebrate the passion of God the Son and the creation of God the Father in its many manifestations as well as the importance of knowledge of the sacred places.

These two manuscripts and their illustrations show how images were deployed to reinforce the importance of sacred place, relics, authors and books. They also serve to underline the importance of codicological context for our own understanding of any one text and its significance for its intended audience. Thereby, they incidentally add to our own knowledge of the intellectual resources of particular groups in the Carolingian world, quite apart from enlarging our understanding of the reception of late antique Christian texts in early medieval Europe. The Vercelli canon law book in particular shows how the image and understanding of the history of the Church were based not only on the compiler's readings of ecclesiastical history but also on the way a very particular perception of the history of the Church was expressed on several key issues. What seems to be reflected in both these manuscripts is a particular understanding of the Christian faith, formed by reading and expressed in written and pictorial form, certainly, but with written texts constituting its principal inspiration.

[40] T. TOBLER and A. MOLINIER, *Itinera Hierosolymitana* 1 (Geneva 1879-1880), pp. 353-359. MS München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, CLM 22053 was not used by *Itineraria et alia geographica*, ed. P. GEYER (Turnhout, 1965: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 125), pp. 114-125. This version is textually related to MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Weissenburg 99, ff. 144r-152v, a famous illustrated copy of the eighth-century manuscript, containing the Catholic epistles.